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ABSTRACT

This lesson is a series of activities and multi-media presentations designed to enable students to understand the historic and geographic roots of some of the problems that Central American nations have faced. Geography, history, writing, and storytelling are used as ways of understanding a multicultural world. Creative thinking and participation in decision-making processes are interactive strategies used in the lessons. A regional approach is used to examine the circumstances that make each nation different from their neighbors. Part of the study is set in the mid-to late-1980s, a time of especially intense turmoil that was of great concern to the foreign policy makers in the United States. Students are encouraged to examine and compare this time to the present through current events and research. (EH)

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CENTRAL AMERICA
A Regional Study

PROJECT CROSSROADS

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Project Crossroads creates classroom-ready lessons using geography, history, writing, and storytelling as a means of understanding a dynamic, multicultural world. Interactive strategies within these lessons challenge students to think creatively and to participate in decision-making processes.

Project Crossroads believes that the classroom is 'a market place of ideas' and practice arena for democratic ideals. Therefore, the classroom remains the most important means of preparing students for their role as citizens.

Staff members offer workshops that model these lessons. The staff is available for follow-up support.

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CENTRAL AMERICA:
A Regional Study

INTRODUCTION: This lesson is a series of activities and multi-media presentations designed to enable students to understand the historic and geographic roots of some of the problems which Central American nations have faced. Based on the information provided, students should be able to better understand and appreciate the societies and cultural groups that live in the area. A regional approach is used to examine what makes each small nation in Central America different from its neighbors. These differences have caused attempts at regional unity to consistently fail. Part of the study is set in the mid to late 1980s, a time of especially intense turmoil that was of great concern to the foreign policy makers in the United States. Students are encouraged to compare this epoch to the present through current events and further research.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To interpret the effects of geography on the history and development of Central America.
2. To analyze the impact of the relationship between the Central American nations, the European nations, and the United States during the past 400 years.
3. To enhance critical thinking skills by encouraging statistical analysis.
4. To offer a model for regional studies that emphasizes the interconnectedness of the geopolitical world.

LEVEL: Can be adapted for any group from seventh to twelfth grades

TIME: Four to six class periods

MATERIALS:

1. Four large **outline maps** of Central America per class
2. Two large **pieces of paper** for charts per class
3. **Markers** (Optional: scissors, colored paper, glue)
4. **Slide shows** (available from Project Crossroads):
   "History of the Mayas and other Indigenous Groups of Central America" and
   "Central America Today"
5. **Time Line**

PROCEDURE:

Before Class:

1. On poster board or butcher paper, make four outline maps for each class using the patterns found on pp. 9-12.
2. Prepare Time Line using pattern found on pp. 27-28.

Day 1:

1. Divide class into six groups.
2. Hand out assignments (Attachments 1-6) and outline maps of Central America.
3. Tell students that they should finish the map work during the period and analyze their map or chart. What conclusions or implications can be made from the data? The questions at the bottom of each assignment sheet serve as a catalyst for discussion and analysis of each map or chart.

Day 2:

1. Present slide show on the "History of the Mayas and Other Indigenous Groups" (available with script from Project Crossroads). Or use any alternative resources on the Mayas. The purpose is to introduce the advanced past civilizations of the Central American region.

2. Have one or more students from each group come up before the class to tell what their map or chart represents and why they decided to show the data in the manner in which they did. The students should then tell the class what conclusions they made from their map or chart (or observations). What effect might these facts make on the societies that live in Central America? A short discussion can follow, and the teacher should conclude with a few observations and stories. (see pp. 13-18)

3. As presentations are given or at some point after the presentations are finished, have students think about and then put on the blackboard or butcher paper any ideas they may have as to why there has been so much conflict in Central America. Refer to this on the last day of the unit.

Day 3:

1. Finish presentations of maps and charts from Day 1 and update the list of roots of conflict started on Day 2.

2. Present slide show, "Central America Today" (available with script from Project Crossroads). Any other videotape or slide show would be acceptable. The purpose of this activity is to summarize what the students have already analyzed and discovered in their groups and to give a visual image of life in Central America today.

Day 4:

1. Put the time line in the front of the room. Announce to students that they will be doing the teaching today.

2. Hand out cards that tell about each of the historical events. Students must:
   a. Decide where their event "fits" into the time line.
   b. Tell the rest of the class in their own words what the event was about and, if possible, what significance it had on Central America.

   Teachers should emphasize key points and try to group the events so as to show the class what was happening in the world and especially in Central America during a time period (see notes pp. 29-33).

3. Classes could add other historical or current events to the time line.

Day 5:

1. This last day should remain fairly flexible so that students have a chance to "digest" information and discuss what they have learned and are thinking.

Depending on the class, one might:

a. Show a video as a catalyst for discussion.

b. Invite into the class someone who has lived or worked in Central America.

c. Brainstorm with the class roots of conflict in the nations of Central America. In thinking about this topic, make a chart on the board or on a piece of butcher paper titled, "Roots of Conflict in Central America." Make three columns on the chart:
   (1) "Within each Nation: Civil Wars"
   (2) "Between Nations of Central America"
   (3) "Reasons for Intervention by Other Nations of the World"
   Students should fill in this chart by remembering what they have learned during the week about Central America from their charts and maps, the slide shows, and the time line of intervention in the history of Central America. An example of each category could be:
   (1) poverty and distribution of wealth,
   (2) border disputes, and
   (3) the strategic location of Central America in the shipping lanes of world trade.

d. Have students collect articles about Central America and share them with the class.

e. Have class research current statistics for a more current year to see how data has changed.

ENHANCING THE CURRICULUM:

This curriculum can be adapted to any class in mid-school or high school. Additional resources and materials can be added to the curriculum to provide a lively visual and experiential dynamic to the classroom.

Examples of Central American culture add a stimulating element to the study of the region. Pictures of clothing worn by Central Americans from Guatemala to Panama can be displayed and provide a view of the people and their daily lives. Actual clothing (for example, handwoven and dyed traditional huipils and cloth from Guatemala) can be displayed. The clothing is very colorful, finely woven and embroidered, and gives a clear example of the traditions and uniqueness of each locale. This clothing and handwoven cloth is inexpensive and available from many import stores.

Central American music is available on records or cassettes. The range of music is interesting as it illustrates influences from the Caribbean region, as well as the Highland areas.

The traditional foods of Central America such as maize, beans, and squash are similar to the traditional foods of the Southwest of the U.S. and illustrate the similarities and connection between the two regions. Cash crops that were introduced by Europeans and North Americans since the Spaniards first settled the area are interesting. Individual research projects about cocoa, coffee, sugar, and bananas are wonderful geography and history lessons in themselves. (Stories about bananas and coffee are included in this unit on pages 5 and 6.)

Literature, poetry, and movies can further illustrate cultural traditions of the region. Inviting speakers into the classroom, who are from Central America or have visited there, are other ways that students may find out about how people from the region live and think.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT THROUGH WRITING:

These writing activities are teaching strategies which encourage critical thinking and creativity. Useful as evaluation tools for the unit, they provide performance-based assessment for teacher and student. The writing suggestions are listed according to each day's activities.

Day 1:

Before beginning the unit, jot down some of what you know about, or associate with, Central America. Do not feel that your list needs to be either accurate or comprehensive — simply record, in a spontaneous manner, whatever comes to mind.

Day 2:

1. While viewing "History of the Mayas and Other Indigenous Groups," take a few notes to help you remember what you saw. After viewing the slideshow, **write a colorful synopsis of what you just saw**. Include as many details and facts as you can. Write your description in such a manner that someone who missed the slideshow but reads your paper will get a definite **feeling** for the Mayas and other indigenous groups in Central America.
2. After map and chart presentations **write a paragraph explaining why, in your view, there has been so much conflict in Central America.**
3. After the map presentations, write about how the topography and weather in your particular region of the United States might affect how people live and behave.

Day 3:

After viewing "Central America Today," write a descriptive synopsis giving an uninformed reader a vivid picture of conditions in Central America. Try to include any details of topography, economics, population, history, and culture (e.g. dress, language, and food) which you may have learned over the past three days.

Day 4:

After participating in the Time Line activity, choose an era in Central American history that interests you. Create a personality and describe what your life might have been like.

Day 5:

1. If your teacher is able to invite someone who has lived or worked in Central America to speak to your class, prepare for the visit by **writing a list of questions** which you would like to ask the visitor. Include questions which you would want to ask if you knew the person very well and questions which you would have no problem asking a stranger.
2. Choose a particular member of a certain Central American society (priest/nun, landholder, farmer, politician, soldier, ambassador, child, etc.) and **write a dramatic monologue** in her/his voice:

   Describe who you are, what you do, and how you feel about the state of affairs in your society. Try to make your tone of voice and manner of speaking reflect the status, occupation, and general circumstances of your chosen character.
3. After reading the abbreviated history of bananas in Central America, **write a short history of beans, squash, cocoa, sugar, or maize**. See what "trivia" you can come up with to enliven your presentation.
4. After ingesting the "Banana Trivia" information, **write an imaginative narrative called, "The Short and (Un)Happy Life of a Banana."** Follow the adventures of a banana from inception to digestion! Wherever possible, refer to what you've learned about the topography, politics, and cultural life of various Central American nations. Be as imaginative as possible!

BANANAS

Bananas are one of the main exports of the Central American region. The majority of these exports are shipped to the United States. Bananas are the most popular fruit in the United States today, but as late a 1876 they were virtually unknown.

Bananas originated in prehistoric times somewhere in Asia, possibly in what is today Malaysia. It is believed that the early plants produced a fruit that was tough and filled with seeds. At some point in history, the plant changed, and a better tasting fruit grew. Bananas become more popular as a food staple in Asia and gradually the plant spread to the west — to northern Africa and southern Europe. It wasn't until 1516 that bananas reached the Americas, brought by the Spaniards in their conquests.

In 1876 a group of foreign traders set up a booth at the Philadelphia Exposition to introduce Americans to this exotic tropical fruit. Within twenty years there were large plantations in Central America growing a variety of bananas that was well suited to the American market. Today, bananas are available in stores in virtually every corner of the world.

Banana Trivia

- Each year people in the United States eat approximately 11 billion bananas or, on the average, 18 pounds of bananas for each man, woman, and child.
- The major banana exporting nations of the world are Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, and (recently) the Philippines. These nations produce 75% of the world's banana export crop.
- If all the bananas imported in the United States were placed end to end, the chain would make a loop twice the distance from the Earth to the moon.
- In Council Bluffs, Iowa, it is against the law to sell bananas without warning the buyer of the dangers of casting the peels on the sidewalk.
- The natives of the province of Buganda, Uganda, are the greatest banana eaters in the world. They consume an average of nine pounds of bananas a day.
- At the turn of the century, banana coffee was a popular substitute for real coffee.
- An acre of bananas produces about nine tons of fruit each year.
- The world record for banana eating is held by an Australian — 63 bananas eaten in ten minutes (October 11, 1972).

A STORY ABOUT COFFEE

The coffee plant was first thought to have originated in what is now the country of Yemen, on the Arabian peninsula, where Europeans found it growing. However, there is botanical evidence that *Coffee arabica* really originated on the plateaus of central Ethiopia in Africa. It is thought that Arabian traders or the Persians brought coffee to Yemen around the sixth century AD. African cultures used coffee earlier, but as a food mixed with animal fat or chewed like nuts.

In Arabia, coffee was first used as a medicine and then as a beverage in connection with meditation and religious exercises. Finally, it was used by the general public and eventually drunk in public coffee houses.

The Arabs jealously guarded the discovery of coffee and only allowed the beans to be taken from their land if they were first dried or boiled. But a Moslem pilgrim from India smuggled some fertile beans out of Arabia and into India where he planted them. Coffee was soon planted up and down India. From there, the French took coffee to France, but it failed to grow there. The Dutch, however, took the bean to Java. Java is an island in what was known as the Dutch East Indies, but is now a part of Indonesia. Here, coffee growing was established. Coffee became available for European noblemen and the wealthy. They imported it from Mocha, the main port of Yemen, or from Java.

Louis XIV of France was an ardent coffee drinker and received a tree from Java as a gift from the Dutch in 1715. From this single tree, billions of coffee trees have come, including almost all the coffee trees in Central and South America. This was because of a man named Chevalier Gabriel Mathiew de Clieu. He stole a branch off of the coffee tree and sailed for an island in the Caribbean Sea. During the voyage, his ship nearly sank in a storm, and he was almost captured by pirates. But he and his coffee sprout survived; in spite of a scarcity of water, he managed to water it. Finally, one small shoot flourished in the soil of Martinique; fifty years later there were 18,791,680 coffee plants in Martinique, and coffee cultivation was established in Mexico and eventually Central America.

The Coffee Plant

A coffee tree looks like a big bush with broad shiny leaves shaped like an arrow and star-shaped clusters of blossoms at the base of the leaves. It is an evergreen and grows 14 to 20 feet if not pruned for easier picking. After the trees flower, the berries form and take six to seven months to mature. Depending upon soil and climate, a tree can produce one to twelve pounds of coffee per year. Coffee grows wild in the rainforests of Ethiopia. Soil must be well watered and well drained. Crops fail in frost or extreme heat.

When the berries are red and ripe, they are picked an dried in the sun or in a mechanical drier. Sometimes a "wet" method is used in which the outer layer of the berry is removed and the coffee bean is washed and dried. The berry is put into a machine called a "huller" which removes a last thin layer and then polishes the bean to a gloss. The beans are put on a conveyor belt where all sticks and dirt are removed. The coffee is then graded (size of bean, where it was grown, etc.) and sent to distributors for roasting.

In 1985 the average American drank 25.9 gallons of coffee!

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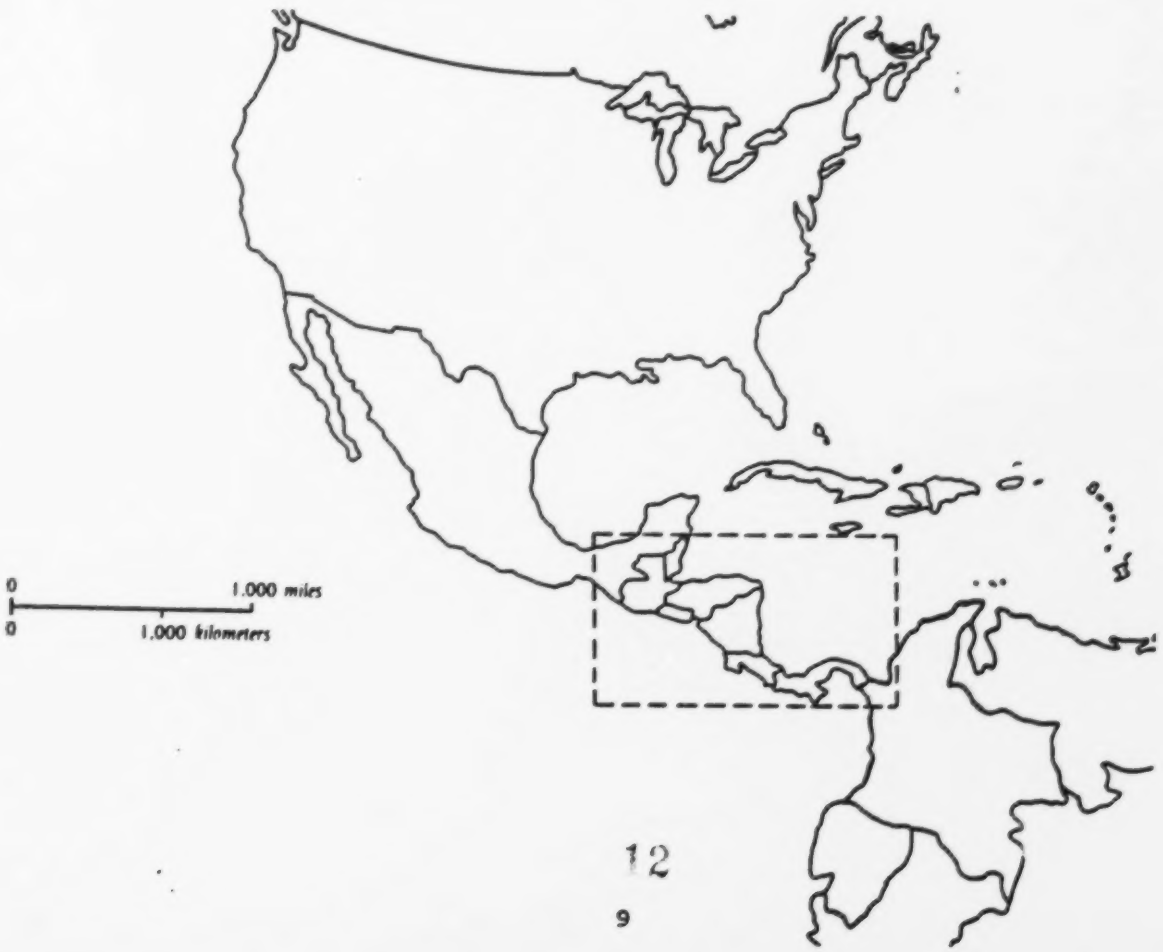
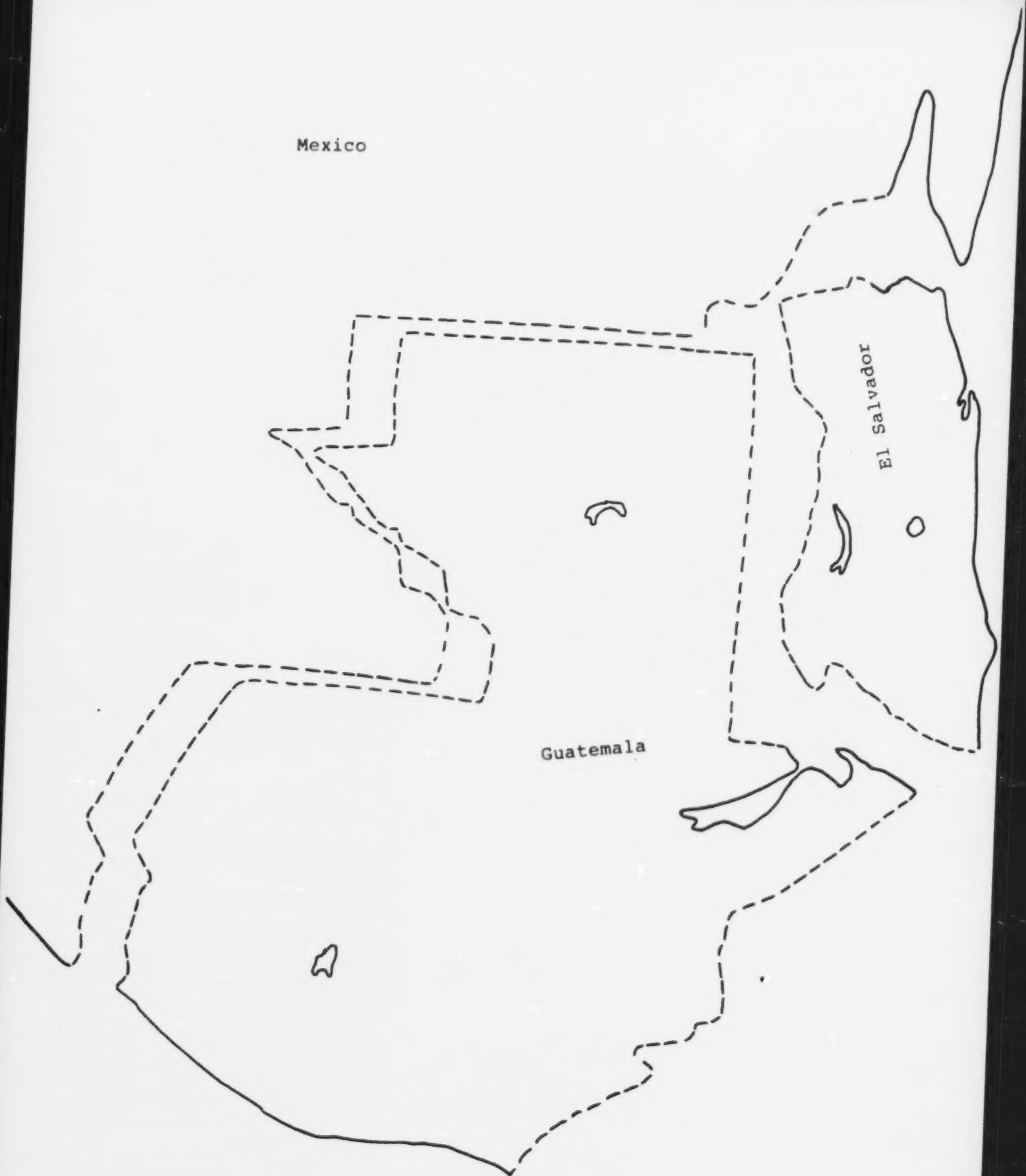
MAKING OUTLINE MAPS FOR GROUP WORK

This lesson works best when large maps of Central America are used. The making of the outline maps could be done by students or by the teacher prior to the beginning of the unit. Each class needs four maps, the size of poster board (22x28"). The two groups that make the charts will receive a blank sheet of poster board or paper and will decide what type of graph they think will best represent their data.

The outlines of the Central American nations are on the following three pages. In addition, there are pieces of northern Colombia and southern Mexico. After the country outlines are cut out, arrange the shapes so that the names of the countries are all facing the same way. Using the small map at the bottom of this page as a guide, piece together the map and trace the outlines. The dotted lines are national borders, the solid lines are boundaries between land and sea. The pieces of Colombia and Mexico are placed in the bottom right corner and the top left corner of the poster board respectively.

An alternative to this is to use small outline maps of Central America found in many social studies map series. The advantage of the big maps, however, is to give students a larger project on which the groups can work and also to allow the remainder of the class to see the finished map during the presentations.

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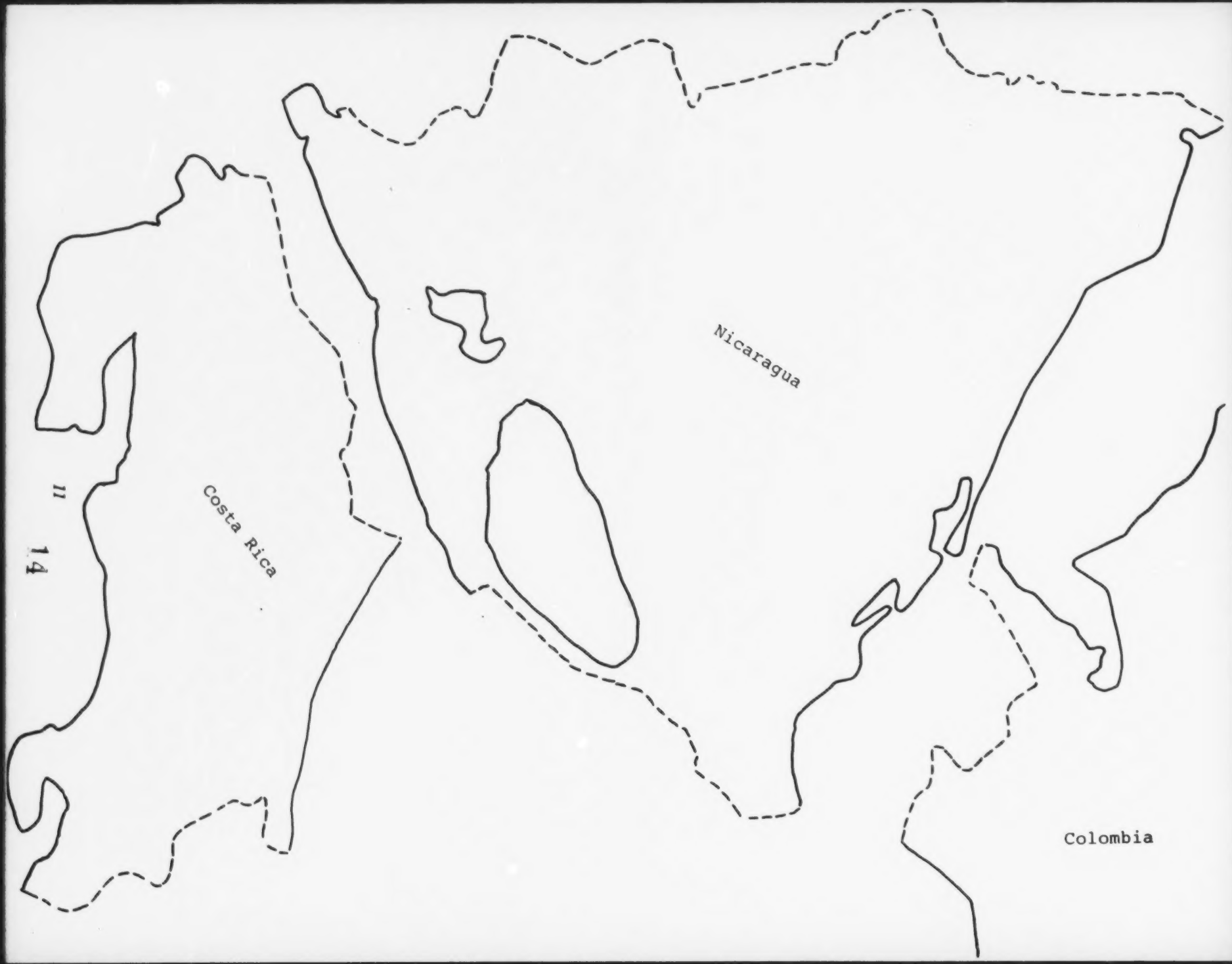
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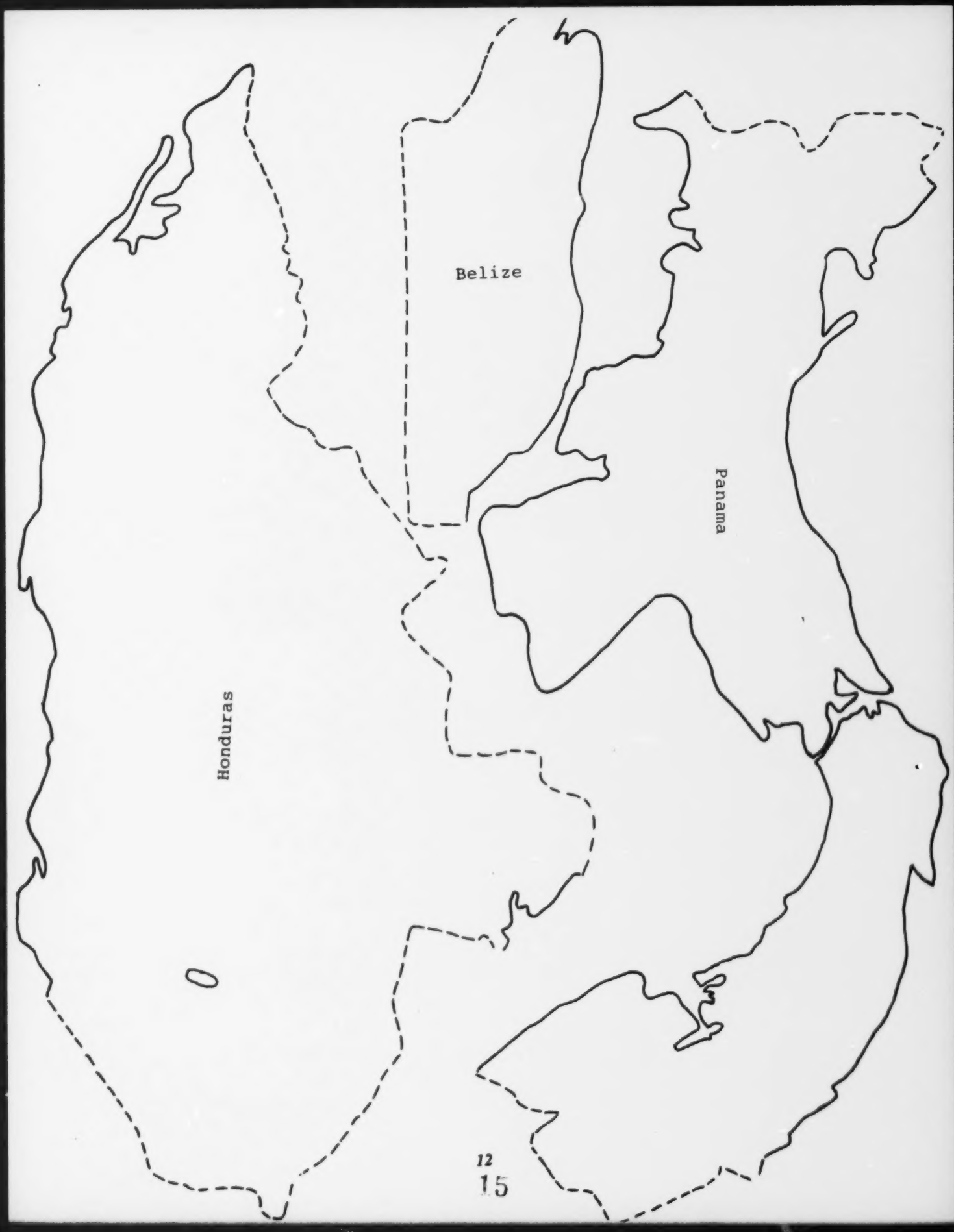

Belize
Panama
Honduras

On Days 2 and 3, each of the 6 groups will come before the class to explain the map or chart they have made and to answer the questions posed to each group. After the student presentations, the teacher may want to add some of the following information:

Map #1: Topography of Central America

1. After the student presentation, the class could brainstorm other implications of the effect topography might play in the development of Central American societies.
2. Discuss the dominance of mountain ranges in Central American and their effects on climate, agriculture, transportation, communications, and fragmentation of societies.
3. Discuss the nature of the mountain ranges (mostly unstable volcanic ranges) and the effects of volcanoes (positive - good soil for agriculture; negative - earthquakes, eruptions) in history.

    a. The following story is included for several reasons. First, it catches students' interest almost immediately. Second, it relates some of the early history of the European rule of Central America. Third, it demonstates the effects of natural disasters on the history and development of Central America.

    In the first half of the 16th century, after years of disputes concerning the division of the Spanish Empire in the region of Central America, the boundaries of the Kingdom of Guatemala were set by the King of Spain. Guatemala was to comprise the area that is today the nations of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Belize, part of southern Mexico, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. Panama was made a part of the Viceroyalty of Peru because it was an important avenue of transporting the gold from the Andes Mountains back to Spain.

    In 1527 the King appointed Pedro de Alvarado as the Governor of Guatemala. In the same year a capital city was founded. It was located at the base of a volcano in what is today southern Guatemala.

(One might pause at this point and ask the class why they think such a location might have been chosen.)

Alvarado, as did many of the conquistadores, first sought to put down any resistance made by the people who were indigenous of the region. He then searched the Kingdom of Guatemala for riches to be sent back to Spain. Disappointed by the lack of riches, especially the scarcity of minerals such as gold, Alvarado traveled to Peru in an attempt to share the wealth of another conquistador, Pizarro. Unsuccessful at this, Alvarado returned to Spain to consult with the King. He received permission to make new explorations if the opportunity arose. Alvarado also fell in love with a woman by the name of Dona Beatriz de la Cueva, a member of a wealthy and influential family in Spain.

The couple married and moved to the capital city of Guatemala. Soon Alvarado heard rumors of the fabulous wealth in the legendary Seven Cities of Cibola, which were supposed to be located in what is today the Southwestern region of the United States. With a small group of soldiers, he traveled north until he reached the present border of Mexico and New Mexico. In a fight with

people from that area, his horse rolled over and crushed him to death. Word got back to the capital city and his widow, Dona Beatriz.

The King of Spain then appointed Dona Beatriz as the new Governor of Guatemala. She was the first and only woman to be a governor of a major Spanish colony. Unfortunately, the rule of Dona Beatriz was brief. Two days after her appointment became official, a wall of mud, rocks and water swept down the slopes of the volcano, destroying the city and killing Dona Beatriz.

The capital was moved to a nearby valley (Antigua). After 10 serious earthquakes from 1575 - 1751, and a very major one in 1773, the capital was again moved, this time to the present location of the capital of the nation of Guatemala. In 1917 a devastating earthquake nearly destroyed the city. Today, this large metropolitan area has few buildings that pre-date this earthquake, so widespread was the damage.

b. *Managua, the capital city of Nicaragua, was all but destroyed in 1931 and again in 1972. The latter earthquake eventually led to the downfall of Dictator Somoza when he was widely accused of fraud in taking some of the millions of dollars of disaster aid form the U.S. and elsewhere for his personal enrichment.*

c. *San Salvador received widespread damage from an earthquake in 1985. Millions of dollars, needed to fight the on-going civil war and to improve the economy, had to be spent to rebuild the capital city.*

4. Point out that the location of Central America has added to this sequence of natural disasters.

   a. *Sandwiched between two tropical seas, hurricanes and other tropical storms often wreak havoc on coastal regions.*

   b. *There is a rainy season from May until November that brings torrential downpours and turns dry stream beds into raging rivers. This leads to erosion on cultivated hillsides and destruction of transportation and communication systems.*

   c. *Location in the tropics has historically affected life in Central America. Human and plant diseases have limited human development of the tropical lowlands and concentrated the populations in the more temperate highlands.*

Map #2: Population Density of Central American Nations

1. Students should explain what population density means and what implications the differing densities of population might have in Central America.

2. Introduce the following concepts:

   a. The *population density* is an average per square mile. If a large city has almost all the population of the nation, this will distort the data.

b. In agricultural societies, the *distribution of land* is extremely important. If a small number of families or companies control the best land or if that land is not used for food for the people of the nation, the capability of the nation to have a large population density not living in poverty is greatly reduced.

c. Depending on the *wealth (resources, surplus food, income from trade, etc.) of a nation*, a greater or smaller population density can be sustained. (e.g. Massachusetts and Singapore have very high population densities but enjoy high standards of living.)

d. Some land is uninhabitable but is still used when figuring the average (swamps, steep mountain slopes, etc.).

3. Give an example of how a difference in population density has had an effect on relations between nations and led to conflict.

a. *El Salvador is a relatively poor nation with a high population density. Historically, a small number of families have held the majority of good farming land, so there have been many landless peasants. El Salvador has had to "export" a great number of people, and this has led to disagreements with neighboring nations. Many have settled in more sparsely populated Honduras. There, the people from El Salvador have competed for jobs with Hondurans. The wealthy landowners in Honduras feared that if the people from El Salvador got land, landless Hondurans would demand land also. In 1968 a law was passed in Honduras forbidding immigrants from owning land. During the World Cup Soccer Games that year, Salvadoreans were brutally attacked in Honduras and after El Salvador won the game against Honduras, the situation worsened and many Salvadoreans fled. War broke out and for the next four days, cities were bombed and armies clashed. The Salvadorean troops advanced into Honduras before a cease-fire was called.*

b. *The very sparsely populated nation of Belize, an English-speaking nation only recently having gained its independence from Great Britain, now has an almost equal number of Spanish-speaking citizens since so many people have settled there from El Salvador and Guatemala, raising tensions and causing disputes over land.*

Map 3: Per Capita GNP of Central American Nations

1. Students should explain what per capita GNP means and what implications a low per capita GNP might have for these nations. Gross National Product (GNP) is the value of everything produced or sold in that country – here measured in U.S. dollars. Per capita GNP means the GNP divided by the population. Per capita GNP is an indicator of the standard of living of a nation.

2. Compare these statistics to the United States. At the time of this data, the per capita GNP for the United States was $21,100. Brainstorm with the class why this difference exists and then some reasons why some of the Central American nations appear to be richer than others. Mention the relationship to geographic location, resources, industry, size of population, etc.

3. Emphasize that these figures are an average. The more important problem in these nations is the distribution of wealth. Make a definition of this term. Give an example of this:

   In Guatemala, 2% of the population controls almost 75% of the land. In an agricultural nation like this, good land is wealth. The richest people have a large majority of the wealth, which makes the majority of the people much poorer than these statistics might indicate.

4. Discuss the fact that these statistics tell only part of the story. What other statistics would one want to know about the economies of these nations? (cost of living, etc.)

Map #4: Exports of Central American Nations

1. Students should give their ideas on the dangers of relying on one or two crops for the majority of their nation's export earnings (effects of plant diseases, world market prices, competition, "all your eggs in one basket," etc.).

2. Point out that beyond this, there are other problems with international trade in Central America:

   a. *A lack of natural deep-water ports has led to the need to build wharves out into the oceans, often a mile or so in length. When tropical storms hit, trade is interrupted.*

   b. *There is only one navigable river in Central America (San Juan River).*

   c. *The majority of the population has traditionally lived in the highlands. Therefore, the goods to be exported and imported must be transported over mountainous roads.*

   d. *The recent phenomenon of using the low wage scales of these nations as a reason to locate factories and manufacturing plants there has led to a slight change in the domination of agriculture in the economies.*

3. Referring back to the topographical map of Group 1, point out the *strategic location of the Panama Canal and show the possible alternate route using the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua.* Since the Panama Canal can no longer be used for some of the largest ocean-going ships, where might a new canal be located? Is this of possible importance to other nations, especially in considering who rules Nicaragua?

4. Discuss the fact that historically, *agricultural goods generally sell for lower prices than manufactured goods.* Since these nations have few natural resources except for their fertile lands, their economies are tied to agricultural exports. Many times during the past one hundred years, Central American nations have found that their low-priced agricultural exports do not pay for their import needs.

Chart #1: Cultural Groups in Central American Nations

1. Students should define the term *"Mestizo"* and then analyze the cultural group make-up of the nations of Central America. They should realize that most nations are mostly Mestizo, except Guatemala (80% Indian), Costa Rica (mostly European), and Belize (50% African).

   a. *This graph exemplifies the cultural make-up of each Central American nation. The term "Mestizo" applies to the descendants of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry in the New World.*

   b. *The Europeans are primarily Spanish but also of German, French, and English heritage.*

   c. *The population that is of African heritage is descended from Africans who were brought as slaves to the New World in the 1600s. Originally, slave labor was used on the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean. At first the indigenous people were used, but as they died from disease and hard labor, Africans were imported to work on the plantations.*

   d. *Indians are the descendants of the original or indigenous peoples of this area. They speak many languages, and often, Spanish is their second spoken language. They retain many of the traditions of the past. The descendants of the Mayas, the most numerous indigenous cultural group, have lived in the area for over 4500 years. In Guatemala they number over 4 million people and speak 24 related languages today.*

   e. *Within the Central American population, there are also people whose families came from China, India, Lebanon, and Arab countries.*

2. Discuss the relationships between cultural groups, distribution of wealth, and political power structures.

   a. *In Guatemala 2% of the population owns over 75% of the land in a society in which Indians comprise 80% of the population.*

   b. *Costa Rica's population and political structure is dominated by people of European descent. Various Indian groups number only about 8000 people.*

   c. *The Miskito Indians in Nicaragua have no political power or wealth within the mainstream Nicaraguan society which is primarily Mestizo in population.*

Chart #2: Economic and Military Aid from the United States to Central America in 1990

1. Ask the students to think of as many reasons as they can to explain why the United States gives economic and military aid to other nations of the world.

2. To aid the class discussion about reasons for aid, it might be helpful to compare the data on the students' chart for aid in 1990 with statistics from 1987.

Economic and Military Aid from the United States in 1987:

	Economic Aid U.S. $	Military Aid U.S. $
Belize	*15.7 million*	*0.6 million*
Costa Rica	*181.3 million*	*1.7 million*
El Salvador	*462.9 million*	*111.5 million*
Guatemala	*187.8 million*	*5.5 million*
Honduras	*197.8 million*	*61.2 million*
Nicaragua	*0.0*	*0.0*
Panama	*12.1 million*	*0.0*

While examining the changes in aid to the various nations of Central American between 1987 and 1990, discuss with the class why these figures might differ from year to year. Is it because the need changes? Or, are there other factors involved? (The U.S. was attempting to oust the government of Nicaragua in 1987, while the former Soviet Union was providing aid; the U.S. was in disagreement with the government of Manuel Noriego of Panama, which we later used military force to oust from power; the civil war in El Salvador was beginning to wind down, and the U.S. was decreasing funding for the government because of widespread human rights abuses.)

3. As the era of the Cold War ended, reasons for the United States and the former Soviet Union to give aid to underdeveloped nations has changed. During the 1980s, Central America was an area of the world where the two superpowers were vying for influence. Civil wars in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador were partly financed by the superpowers and their allies.

4. Using available sources, have students research current foreign aid to the nations of Central America.

1. The territory inhabited by the Maya included almost all the land east of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mexico including the Yucatan peninsula, all of Guatemala and Belize, western Honduras, and El Salvador. The lowlands form a narrow band along the Pacific Coast and another along the Gulf Coast that widens to form the Yucatan Peninsula. The highlands extend from Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost state, across southern Guatemala into Honduras and El Salvador.

2. Much of the land inhabited by the Maya is jungle with thick growth of cedar, mahogany, sapodilla, breadnut, and ceiba trees. The ceiba was considered sacred and dominated Maya religious beliefs.

3,4,5. The Maya were probably descendants of the ancient Olmec from the northwest which is now the state of Veracruz in Mexico. The Olmec and Maya shared a belief in a vast array of gods. These slides show early Olmec stone carvings of gods. The Maya also borrowed from the Olmec rituals such as the playing of a sacred ball game. The Olmecs migrated into Maya territory around 1200 B.C. and vanished around 400 A.D.

6. This is an artist's view of a Maya city based on the recent discovery of an archeological site. Until John L. Stephens and Frederick Catherwood, a 19th century North American archeologist and artist, discovered and recorded the ruins of Maya cities, knowledge of Mesoamerica as the site of a vast, sophisticated, and flourishing civilization was almost lost to the outside world. By the time the Spaniards arrived in the 1500's, the Maya civilization was in decline with little evidence of its former splendor. Thick vegetation had reclaimed many of the abandoned cities.

   About 50 B.C. a stratified society (almost a caste system) developed around city centers. The elite, composed of a ruling class of families and a class of priests, controlled matters of government, religion, commerce, and warfare. Priests directed rituals corresponding to all aspects of life and death. They developed sophisticated mathematical systems that incorporated a symbol representing zero. They studied astronomy which was used to mark time and events as well as foretell the future.

   Skilled builders erected huge stone pyramids, palaces, and public buildings around central plazas. Artisans carved and painted murals covering the interior and exterior of buildings. There were many accomplished craftsmen in Maya society such as weavers, potters, sculptors, jewelers, and scribes who recorded Maya history and knowledge in books. The

farmers sustained the entire society by working communal plots of land called milpas as well as farming their own fields. They grew corn, beans, and squash in raised plots irrigated by canals in the lowland or on hillside terraces in the highlands.

7,8. Palenque, a Maya city in ruin, lies in the highlands of southern Mexico and is surrounded by dense vegetation. Archeologists believe that people traveled by foot over this rugged terrain. There is no evidence of transportation by wheeled vehicles although Maya children played with small toys with wheels. The rugged terrain may have been a factor in the development of separate city-states that formed alliances or warred with one another. (One such city in Guatemala is Tikal which covered 25 square miles and consisted of 3,000 buildings!)

9. The Maya built arches while Europe was still in the Dark Ages.

10,11. Huge pyramids were constructed with inner passages, chambers and tombs like this one at the side on Tulum in the Yucatan.

12. Due to lack of funding, archeologists have not been able to uncover and reconstruct all known Maya sites. These grassy mounds still partially cover former buildings. There are probably Maya cities still waiting to be discovered.

13,14. The most traditional of the Maya descendants are the Lacandon Indians. They fled deep within the jungle upon the arrival of the Spaniards in the 1500's and continue to live in a remote area in southern Mexico. Their numbers have dwindled although they still practice traditional Maya rituals. The Lacandons call themselves "Hach unik" which means the true people.

They farm corn, use canoes, pray to a rain and a sun god, and make bark paper as did the ancient Maya. They have had little contact with the outside world until recently. Their way of life is threatened by the arrival of new settlers in the area.

15. This is the site of Uxmal in the Yucatan. According to the Maya, the world is a flat square platform upon which the people live. The points of each of the corners are gods, the Bacabs, who hold up the sky.

16. The Yucatan is a flat limestone formation riddled with natural basins or wells in which rainfall collects and remains during the dry season. The sacred ball games were played on courts such as this one at Chichen Itza. Without using their hands, players tried to push a rubber ball through the stone ring attached to the side wall of the ball court.

17. The winning team was highly honored and bestowed with gifts. It is believed that the winning team captain was chosen as a sacrifice and thrown into a sacred well. Many artifacts have also been found in these sacred wells which have furthered our knowledge of the Maya.

18,19. The Maya were astronomers and built observatories like this one at Chichen Itza. At the spring and autumn equinoxes, the sun's rays entered a window of the observatory at sunset and was recorded.

The Maya book of Oracle said that Katun 13 Ahau (February 25, 1520) would bring an end of the world. "BLood shall descend from the tree and the stone, and heaven and earth shall burn." The Spaniards arrived on the Yucatan coast in the 1500's.

The Itza people from the north took over but these factors may also have caused the decline of a once flourishing civilization:

a. a large population growth that could not be sustained (400 people per square mile)
b. drought beginning around 800 A.D.
c. evidence of malnutrition and disease
e. increased warfare and collapse of trade

During the decline, farmers gave up intensive crop techniques and the estimated population of three million declined to 450,000 in less than a century.

20. These artifacts found in Maya ruins provide us with a glimpse of life of the Maya society. The feathered garments and richly adorned headresses were worn by the elite. The Maya ideal of beauty was a long, thin face. Heavy jewelry pierced and distended the earlobes. To achieve the sloping, elongated forehead, Maya women clamped the pliable skulls of the growing infants between boards. They suspended balls of pitch from thongs tied around an infant's forehead so s(he) became crosseyed.

21. Today's Maya descendants in the Yucatan wear woven dresses called huipils which, through their unique design, identify one's village of origin and place within society.

22,23. The farmers today, as in the Maya period, traditionally burn the forest, plant crops for three years, and then let the land lie fallow. Beans, corn, and squash are still the staples of their diet.

24. In the highlands, rich volcanic soil helps produce a variety of crops for the marketplace.

25. The Spaniards conquered the Yucatan and Guatemala in part because the Maya were divided by rivalries. The Maya fought guerrilla style to avoid Spanish artillery and horses. It

took about 30 years for the Maya to be defeated. This was longer than it took to defeat the Aztecs or the Incas. Many of the Maya survivors were sent as slaves to the Caribbean in the 1500's. Many thousands of Maya died of Old World diseases (measles, smallpox, TB, etc.) during the Spanish conquest. The first epidemic of measles killed one half of the Indians living in Mesoamerica. After a century of Spanish rule, as much as 90% of the population had disappeared.

In Guatemala, the Spaniards found groves of cocoa on the Pacific slopes. They seized them and kept the Indians as workers. Later, these farms grew sugar. About a century ago coffee became a cash crop. Today about 75% of Guatemala's farmland is owned by only 2% of the population. Indians work these vast holdings and earn about $1.25 a day.

There have been Indian rebellions protesting this pattern of land ownership; the Caste War of the Yucatan in 1847, the Indian Siege of San Cristobal de las Casas in 1869, and more recent civil strife of the 1980's. To give an example of social conditions, Indians were not allowed to walk on the sidewalks of San Cristobal de las Casas (a town in southern Mexico) until 1960 or stay in town overnight until 1965.

26. The Maya were considered heathen by the Church. Spanish priests burned many Maya books which recorded in hieroglyphics their long history and beliefs. Only three books remain in museums in Spain and Austria. They have been useful in attempts to decode hieroglyphics on stone such as this one.

27,28,29,30,31,32. Our knowledge of the Maya comes from archeological sites, artifacts such as pottery and stone carvings, and...

33,34,35,36. understanding the living culture of the four million descendants of the Maya in Central American today.

37,38. The Spaniards sought gold and found it in southern Central American in Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia as well as further south.

39. Indigenous groups distinct from the Maya lived in what is now Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. Their descendants, though few in number, still retain their own cultures and languages.

40. These are Miskito Indians who live in Nicaragua. The coastal Miskito Indians of Nicaragua and Honduras survived the Spanish conquest because of their alliance with British, French, and Dutch pirates. The pirates taught them how to use firearms, and, in return, the Miskitos gave them provisions for their ships. They also provided them with navigators and recruits for raids. Many Miskitos could speak English and French.

The Miskitos today number about 70,000 people who live along 400 miles of Atlantic coastline and along the CoCo River. This region has always been isolated from the rest of the Nicaraguan people because of the jungle and lack of roads. The Miskitos speak their own distinct language, and belong to a Protestant Moravian Church rather than the Catholic Church.

The Miskitos eat fish, turtles, manatees, and deer. They plant manioc, bananas, plantains, and coconuts. They process oil from the coconuts, use the husks for fuel, and use the milk for cooking. They use dugout canoes for their travels.

During civil strife in Nicaragua in the 1980's, the Miskito families were often divided between pro-Sandinista and pro-Contra members. Fighting displaced communities to refugee camps in Honduras. The Sandinistas promised the Miskitos more autonomy in their own affairs. A key issue remains as to whether the Miskitos will be able to write their own constitution.

41,42. The town of Bluefields in Nicaragua is populated by descendants of indigenous people and slaves from Africa. Like the Miskitos, the people of Bluefields have a culture distinct form the Nicaraguan mainstream and are isolated from the established power and economy of the nation.

43,44. These girls are Cuna Indians from Panama. The Cuna live on about fifty islands off the coast. They number about 25,000 and depend on the mainland for most of their food, water, and firewood. Each island is presided over by a chief, and most laws adhere to Cuna custom. The molas, world famous textiles that the Cuna women wear, were once body designs.

The Cuna, unlike the Miskitos, have had a relatively cohesive political history and have been able to achieve autonomy within the Panamanian government.

The Caribbean area of Central America includes several other distinct indigenous populations.

"Central America Today"
Slide Narration

1. Even in the 1500's Central America was a strategic location. The Spaniards hoped to find gold in the area, but their discoveries of the precious metal did not compare to that found to the north, in Mexico, and to the south in today's Peru. However, to get the gold and other riches back to Spain, the Conquistadors carried it from the Pacific Ocean across the narrow isthmus of Central America to be loaded onto ships to make the trans-Atlantic voyage.

2. One source of potential riches in Central America for Spain was found in the native populations. Spaniards used this labor to grow sugar cane to be sold in Europe. The Indian cultures had already broken into fairly isolated groups so the Spaniards found it easy to conquer them.

3. Today in Central America we have the legacy of the social system established by the Spanish Conquistadors. Indians were required by law to work part of the time either for the government or a Spanish land-owner. The best agricultural land was gradually taken from the native Americans and became concentrated in the hands of wealthier and more powerful Spaniards. The native peoples did not have the same concept of land ownership, so they were gradually forced to occupy the marginal land.

4. Another major influence of the Spaniards was that the priests introduced new food crops to the area. Bananas were brought from Guinea, Africa, in the early 1800's. The plant adapted well and provided a good new source of food.

5. It later became an important export to other nations. Americans today consume 11 billion pounds of bananas a year, 18 pounds per person on the average.

6. Another new crop, coffee, was brought from Ethiopia.

7. These two crops, along with sugar cane, gradually came to dominate the agriculture of Central America. Large companies, sometimes with foreign owners, produced these crops and exported them to Europe and the United States. They were grown on some of the best agricultural land of these nations.

8. Another more recent crop to be grown in large quantitites to be sold as an export is cotton which requires a great deal fo fertilizer to grow well.

9. In the past decade, more and more new land has been cleared to raise cattle. Much of the meat is exported to the United States to be sold to fast-food restaurants or as pet food.

10. The crops that became less and less important to the large land-owners were the ones that provided food for the Central American people. Some of the small nations soon found themselves importing food to eat as their best land was taken for the cultivation of crops to export to other nations.

11. As the best land was devoted to export crops and the populations grew, especially in the past 40 years, land was cultivated that should have been left in forest. These steep slopes easily erode during the downpours of the rainy season from May until November.

12. In El Salvador, so much land has been cleared, that as the population has grown, firewood for cooking now has to be imported from neighboring Honduras.

13. In nations such as El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, with the best land held by the wealthiest and most politically powerful people, the division of wealth and the accompanying differences in lifestyles are very noticeable.

14. The standard of living of the wealthier land-owners might not be considered to be extravagant in affluent communities in the United States,

15. but is often resented by those living in poverty.

16. Many people without land work in the fields of the wealthier landowners, usually for very low wages.

17. The standard of living of the majority of Central Americans is quite low compared to the developed nations like the United States and European countries.

18, 19, 20. Many people live on a subsistence level, that is, without a stable wage, growing their own food or living by their means from day to day.

21. During the past 30 years, a large number of people have migrated to cities in hopes of improving their standard of living.

22, 23, 24, 25. Attracted by the seeming wealth of cities, people often end up in urban poverty at least as bad as the rural poverty they left behind.

26. Other nations, especially the United States, have a relatively large stake in the economies of many Central American nations.

27. One sees the evidence of this in the many American companies advertising their brands. . .

28. and in the products that are sold in the stores.

29. Television is widely viewed, and people are attracted to the material lifestyle that they see. The dream of a better life remains only that, and as expectations remain unfulfilled, resentment grows.

30. Other U.S. companies have established manufacturing plants in Central America, attracted by the low salaries earned by the workers. In a factory in El Salvador, the daily wage is much less than what a company might pay workers in the U.S. for each hour of work.

31. All of these social and economic problems have led to unrest in some of these nations. People protest and demand reforms in the economies and in the division of wealth.

32. Landless peasants ask for land to farm . . .

33. and in some nations large land holdings have been divided into small plots to be run by agricultural cooperatives of farmers.

34. Often the products of the cooperatives are foods that will be consumed by the farmers and others in their nations.

35. But, reform has come slowly, and ruling families have kept control of some nations throughout most of this century, either by dictatorship or by otherwise controlling the government and the military.

36. During the 1980s, both governments and rebel groups received military and economic aid from other nations and groups around the world . . .

37. and gradually some Central American nations became increasingly violent.

38,39. Both in the cities and in the countryside, fighting in civil wars forced people to take sides and arm themselves.

40. People were often searched and asked for identification and allegiance, either to a government or an opposition rebel group.

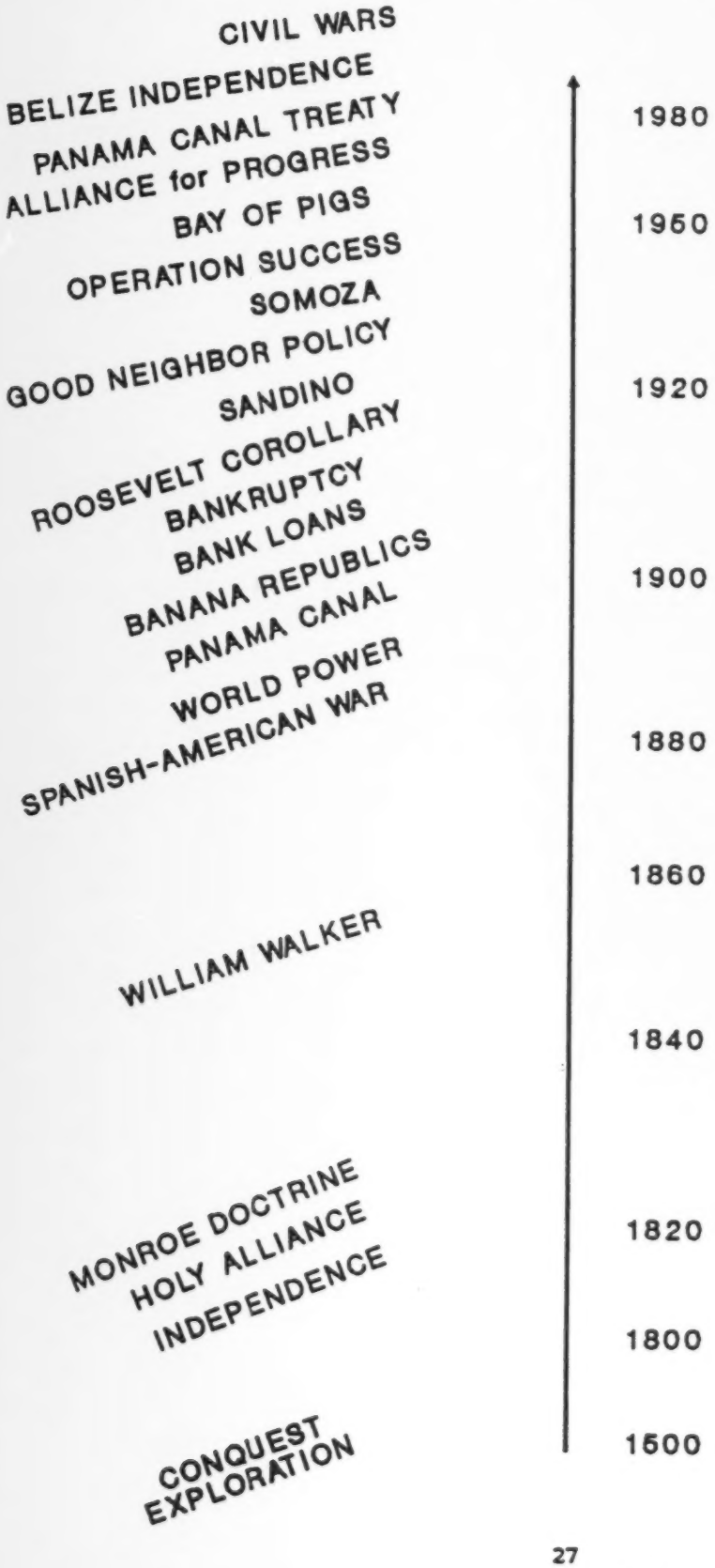
41. There were too often people murdered for their political beliefs . . .

42. or sometimes a person who had been too outspoken would simply disappear and never be heard of again.

43. To escape the violence, some people left their homes and went to refugee camps run by the governments, other nations, or international groups like the Red Cross.

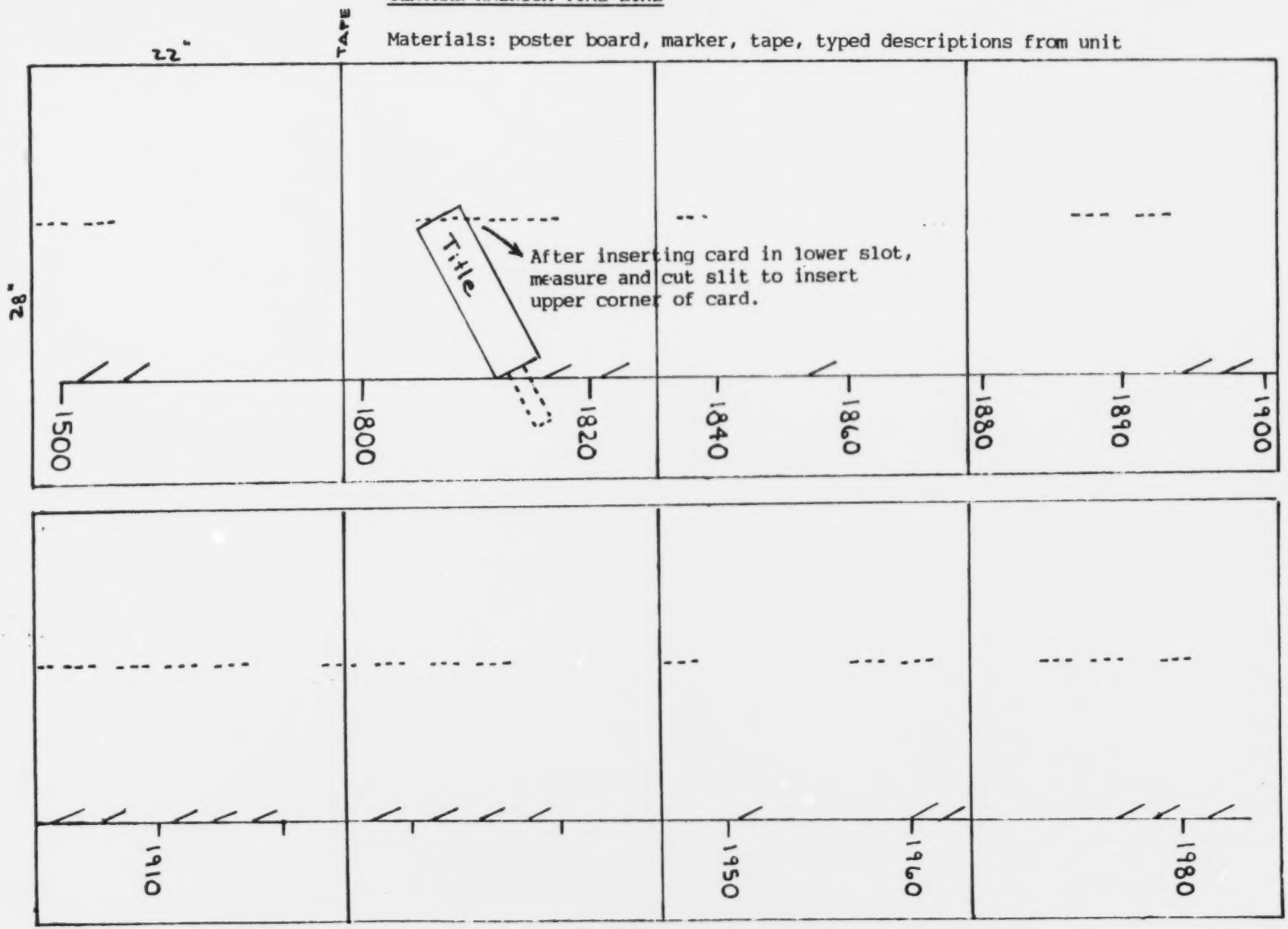
44. Others simply left altogether. These statistics are the number of refugees from the tiny nation of El Salvador that were living in other nations in 1985.

CENTRAL AMERICA - TIME LINE



CENTRAL AMERICA TIME LINE

Materials: poster board, marker, tape, typed descriptions from unit



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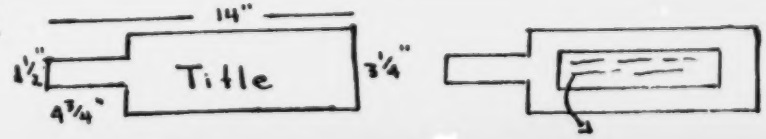

32

Historical Timeline of Intervention in Central America

The purpose of this activity is to give students a brief history of the involvement of the United States and the European nations in Central America. The timeline will give a perspective to the situation in the region today. Together with the map analysis, the timeline should enable the students to make more informed opinions.

The activity can be shortened depending on the level and interest of the group. If this is to be shortened, the topics marked "optional" can be omitted without detracting from the activity.

Procedure:

Students are given a colored card that represents the viewpoint of Central America (red), Europe (yellow), or the United States (green). On the front of each card is a term, person, or historical event. On the back of each card is an explanation of the topic.

Students are told to read the card and to perform two tasks. First, they must decide where on the timeline to place the card. Second, they must prepare an oral explanation of their topic so that they can teach the rest of the class what they have learned. This must be done in their own words. Five minutes is usually sufficient preparation time.

The teacher will then begin by explaining the timeline and the procedures. Beginning in the year 1500, students are asked if anyone has a topic that should be placed on the timeline. The topics will be dealt with chronologically and will tell a story. Topics are grouped by time period and historical relevance. After each grouping is placed on the timeline and explained by the students, the teacher should re-cap the events and their connections. (See notes in parentheses after each grouping.)

1. **Exploration (yellow):**
   With larger ships and new navigational instruments, European nations began to explore other regions of the world. They searched for items such as gold, new colonies and converts to Christianity.

2. **Conquest (red):**
   By the time the Europeans reached Central America, the advanced civilization of the Mayas had declined and the people had spread out into isolated groups. They often warred against each other. The descendents of the Mayas were conquered by the Europeans and exploited for their labor. Spain was the nation that gained control of most of Central America, naming the new colony "Guatemala."

(A short discussion can follow these two presentations. The conquest represents the ultimate intervention - other nations came and conquered Central America, completely dominating the cultures and determining the course of the region.)

3. **Independence (red):**
After 300 years of Spanish rule, the Central American people were influenced by the Wars of Independence in the United States, Mexico, and South America. Most of what is today, Central America gained its independence from Spain, although the people remained divided among themselves. In spite of attempts to unify into one nation, a Federation of Central American States, they broke apart into small, independent nations.

4. **Holy Alliance (yellow):**
In the early 1800's, the European nations had been weakened by wars and many of Spain's colonies in the Western Hemisphere had successfully declared their independence. A group of nations that called themselves the Holy Alliance wanted to regain the lost colonies for Spain.

5. **Monroe Doctrine (green):**
The people of the United States sympathized with the revolutionary movements in Latin America which followed their own independence. A threat to independence came with the formation of the Holy Alliance. This group of European nations wanted to regain for Spain her lost colonies in Latin America. President Monroe issued a proclamation warning the European nations not to attempt to retake the colonies or to intervene in the Western Hemisphere.

(Students should see that independence in Central America was in part gained as a result of wars and confusion in Europe. Once peace and stability were restored, European nations wanted the colonies back. The United States, a new nation proud of its independence, saw this as a threat and issued the Monroe Doctrine, still cited today by our leaders although in a very different context.)

6. **William Walker (green, optional):**
Just before the U.S. Civil War, William Walker took advantage of a feud between groups of Nicaraguans and threats by other Central American nations to intervene in Nicaragua. With a small band of men from the United States, he was able to become Commander in Chief of the Nicaraguan Army. With the financial backing of slave owners in the Southern states who wished to have Nicaragua join the United States as a slave state, Walker was then able to declare himself President of Nicaragua. Under international pressure, Walker was later forced to leave Nicaragua and was shot while trying to take power in Honduras.

(Although this is not a major event in the history of the world, it represents an interesting relationship between an American citizen, politics in the United States, and Central American nations. Walker was a believer in "manifest destiny", and the Southern states saw this as a logical step in the crusade for a majority in the U.S. Senate. It also represents the attitudes of many people in that time period of the relationship between the United States and Central America - a weak region in need of U.S. guidance, if not outright rule. Walker legalized slavery in Nicaragua and decreed English to be the official language of the nation.)

7. **Spanish-American War (yellow):**
In the brief Spanish-American War, the United States won colonies from Spain. These included Puerto Rico and Cuba in the Caribbean, and Guam and the Philippines in the Pacific.

8. **World Power (green):**
When the United States won new possessions in the Spanish-American War, it was realized that the territories needed to be supplied and protected. Since some were in the Caribbean and some were in the Atlantic, a new way was needed to get ships between the two oceans. The route around the tip of South America was long and dangerous.

9. **Panama Canal (red):**
France had already tried to build a canal across Panama, which was then a territory of the South American nation of Colombia. When the United States wanted to try to build the canal, a route through Panama and another through Nicaragua were considered. After deciding to build it in Panama, the United States supported people in that territory when they declared themselves to be an independent nation. A treaty was then signed giving the United States permission to build the canal and control of the area surrounding the canal. The canal took ten years to build and was completed just as hostilities broke out in what was to become World War I.

(Because of the Spanish-American War, the United States now found itself to be a world power with possessions in both the Caribbean and the Pacific. To successfully protect and maintain these possessions, the United States had two choices: to maintain two ocean fleets of ships or to obtain a better way to get supplies across the Americas. Because of its geographical location, Central America was chosen as the logical place to build a canal. Also an opportunity was seen in the discontent in the Colombian territory of Panama. Students should refer back to their topographical map for the location of the alternate routes and to determine why Colombia could do little to put down the revolt in Panama with U.S. battle ships patrolling the coastlines. The canal was completed in 1914.)

10. **Banana Republics (green):**
In the late 1800's, the United States began to increase its trade with other nations of the world. American companies invested large sums of money in places like Central America. One of the big investors was the United Fruit Company which cleared and planted thousands of acres of tropical lowlands with banana trees. Many of the Central American nations became known as "Banana Republics" because of these export crops and the influence on Central American governments that these companies had.

11. **Bank Loans (yellow):**
In the late 1800's, many banks in Europe loaned large sums of money to the Central American nations to build roads, railroads, ports, etc. so that these nations could become more developed and be able to export their products more efficiently.

12. **Bankruptcy (red):**
Since the exports of the Central American nations in the early 1900's were mainly low-priced agricultural products, they were not earning enough money to repay loans they had borrowed from European and American banks. The governments of the European nations threatened to intervene with their militaries if they didn't get their money back.

13. **Roosevelt Corollary (green):**
In 1904, the United States warned the European nations not to intervene in the Western Hemisphere. The President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, also declared that if a Latin American nation could not pay its debts or govern itself effectively, the United States would intervene in that nation. United States' investments needed to be protected.

(At about the same time that we found new interest in Central America as a trade route between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans and as a place to invest money, a financial crisis worsened. European banks had loaned large sums of money to Central American nations who could not repay the loans. As Europeans demanded repayment and threatened intervention, the United States changed the interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. Warning European nations not to intervene in Latin America, the United States also in effect told nations of the Western Hemisphere to repay debts and govern themselves effectively or face intervention by the United States.)

14. **Intervention (green):**
By 1910, the United States had transferred much of Central America's debt from European to American banks. U.S. companies also continued to invest large sums of money in Central America. The Nicaraguan government, faced with a revolution and interference from her Central American neighbors, invited the United States to send in the Marines. The United States intervened repeatedly over the next twenty years, protecting its commercial interests and maintaining order. The U.S. also intervened militarily in Honduras and Panama.

15. **Sandino (red):**
Augusto Cesar Sandino led a seven year opposition to U.S. Marine occupation of Nicaragua. He was later assassinated but remained a popular folk hero to the Nicaraguan people.

(The United States, on the basis of the Roosevelt Corollary and a policy that historians refer to as "dollar diplomacy," moved to protect its interests in Latin America by direct intervention in several nations from 1911 until 1933. The United States was sometimes invited in to maintain order; at other times, the U.S. took it upon itself to do so if investments were perceived as threatened. One group not appreciating intervention was led by Sandino, a folk hero after whom the Sandinistas of Nicaragua were named.)

16. **Good Neighbor Policy (green):**
In response to complaints from Latin American nations about intervention, President Hoover, and later President Roosevelt, initiated a new policy of non-intervention in the affairs of nations of the Western Hemisphere. Nations agreed that "no state has the right to intervene in the internal or external affairs of another." All nations were to work together for common goals and security.

17. **Somoza (red):**
As part of a new policy of non-intervention in the affairs of Latin American nations, the United States prepared to withdraw the Marines from Nicaragua. Before leaving, a strong National Guard was created to enforce the peace. Anastasio Somoza Garcia was chosen as head of the National Guard. He soon seized power from the elected President. He and his family ruled Nicaragua with an iron fist for the next 45 years.

(Acting on both domestic and international pressure, the United States changed its policy of intervention. But, before the Marines were withdrawn from Nicaragua, a strong National Guard under Somoza was created. He had been educated in the U.S. and spoke fluent English. It is estimated that by 1979, the Somoza family and their close associates held almost 20% of the wealth of that nation. Much resentment against the United States in Nicaragua is traced to the

subsequent support of the Somozas. Soon after taking power as head of the National Guard, Somoza invited Sandino to dinner to discuss tha future of Nicaragua without the U.S. Marines. After this meeting, Sandino was assassinated by Somoza's men.)

18. **Operation Success (green, optional):**
Although officially agreeing that the nations of the Western Hemisphere should not intervene in each others' internal affairs, the CIA supported a covert action to overthrow the government of Guatemalan President Arbenz. This event took place during the first term of President Eisenhower. Fears of Communist influence and talk of seizing unused land from the United Fruit Company influenced the decision to intervene.

(This was the model on which the Bay of Pigs Operation was based.)

19. **Bay of Pigs (green):**
In 1959 Fidel Castro overthrew the Batista Dictatorship on the Caribbean island of Cuba. The United States became concerned about growing ties between Cuba and the Soviet Union. The United States supported an invasion of Cuba by Cuban exiles in what was known as the Bay of Pigs Operation. The soldiers were trained in Guatemala and Nicaragua. They were unsuccessful in trying to overthrow Castro.

(This is important to understand since it marked a renewed commitment to intervention invoking the Monroe Doctrine. A teacher could also interject the Cuban Missile Crisis. Both of these events led to a new concern about European influence, in this case the ideology and military force of the Soviet Union, and a reassessment of U.S. policy toward Latin America.)

20. **Alliance for Progress (green):**
A year after the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs Operation, President Kennedy created the Alliance for Progress to promote Latin American economic development. By making the Latin American nations prosperous, it was hoped that they would not want to change their economic systems or establish further ties with the Soviet Union.

(The idea behind this was that if nations are prosperous and people are content, they will not choose the Communist path. This program began massive aid projects throughout Central and South America.)

21. **Panama Canal Treaty (red, optional):**
Under the Panama Canal Treaty signed by President Carter and General Omar Torrejos, ownership of the Canal Zone will be transferred to Panama in 1999. The United States will have the right to intervene militarily if the neutrality of the canal is threatened.

22. **Belize Independence (red, optional):**
Belize became the last Central American nation to gain its independence (from Britain) in 1981. The small nation is sometimes threatened by Guatemala which claims some of the territory of Belize. During the 1980's, a large number of people from Guatemala and El Salvador have settled in Belize.

23. **Civil Wars (red):**
Hostilities between economic and cultural groups in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala intensified in the 1970's and the 1980's. Often aided by other nations of the world, civil wars raged in these nations. More than 200,000 people have been killed in the fighting.

MAP #1 - TOPOGRAPHY OF CENTRAL AMERICA

1. **Please be as neat and as accurate as possible; the class will be referring to your map all week. On your group's large map, label the following:**

NATIONS:			**BODIES of WATER and RIVERS**	
Belize	*El Salvador*	*Mexico*	*Pacific Ocean*	*Caribbean Sea*
Colombia	*Guatemala*	*Nicaragua*	*Panama Canal*	*San Juan River*
Costa Rica	*Honduras*	*Panama*	*Lake Managua*	*Lake Nicaragua*

2. **Put the scale of inches:miles on your map (1 inch equals 40 miles)**

3. **From the descriptions below of the topography and regions of each Central American nation, show on your map the land forms mentioned. You might cut out volcanoes, use markers, etc.**

BELIZE *is a nation that is mainly tropical lowlands. The north is low and flat, but the southwest is a hilly area with dense forests. The hills have an average elevation of 2,000-3,000'.*

COSTA RICA *has a rugged central highland area with three volcanic mountain ranges that run the length of the nation and rise to 13,000' in the south. There is a relatively wide band of forested plains in the east that narrows as it goes south. There is a narrower plain on the Pacific coast (25 miles wide).*

EL SALVADOR *can be divided into three regions: (1) a narrow Pacific coastal belt of tropical lowlands, (2) a central region of plateaus and valleys with two almost parallel rows of volcanoes, the highest rising to almost 7,700' above sea level, and (3) northern mountains rising to almost 9,000'.*

GUATEMALA *consists of a sparsely populated northern 1/3 of tropical lowlands that extend to the Caribbean Sea, a narrow coastal plain of tropical lowlands (25 miles wide) along the Pacific, and the Central Highlands which consist of valleys, hills and mountains that reach to almost 14,000'. The highlands contain some volcanoes in the south near El Salvador.*

HONDURAS *is a mountainous nation with two ranges bisecting from the NW to the SW. The mountains rise to 9,000' in the north. There are tropical lowlands along both coasts. The eastern lowlands follow rivers inland.*

NICARAGUA *has three major regions: (1) a large triangular shaped central mountain area from the border of Honduras to a point in the south by Costa Rica, (2) a wide belt of tropical lowlands in the East, and (3) a belt of tropical lowlands that stretch from the Pacific Coast along the San Juan River and the two large lakes to the Caribbean Sea. There are volcanoes to the east of the lakes.*

PANAMA *is mostly mountainous or hilly with three mountain ranges that form a backbone of the isthmus. Mountains in the west rise to over 11,000'. On both coasts, there is a lowland area of tropical forest. The mountains have a gap where the Panama Canal is located.*

4. **After completing your map, prepare a presentation for the rest of the class explaining what your map represents. While teaching others about the topography of Central America, consider the following questions:**

1) What might the topography of Central America look like if you were to visit these nations?
2) Where do you think the Europeans first permanent settlements were located in Central America? Why?
3) What influence would the topography of Central America have on the development of a transportation system and on communications among regions?
4) How would living near volcanoes affect people's lives in Central America?
5) Try to find out what the climate of Central America is like and what the main occupation of people in Central America might be.

MAP #2 - POPULATION DENSITY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

1. **Please be as neat and as accurate as possible; the class will be referring to your map all week. On your group's large map, label the following:**

NATIONS:	CAPITAL CITIES:	BODIES of WATER and RIVERS:
Belize	*Belmopan*	*Caribbean Sea*
Colombia	*Guatemala*	*Lake Managua*
Costa Rica	*Managua*	*Lake Nicaragua*
El Salvador	*Panama*	*Pacific Ocean*
Guatemala	*San Jose*	*Panama Canal*
Honduras	*San Salvador*	*San Juan River*
Mexico	*Tegucigalpa*	
Nicaragua		

2. **The population density of a nation is an average of how many people there are per square mile. To determine the population density, you divide the population of the nation by the area. Calculate the population density of each of the seven Central American nations. Then use your imaginations to find a way to represent the figures of population density on your large map. Use symbols so that the rest of the class can clearly see which are the most densely and sparsely populated countries in Central America.**

NATION:	POPULATION: (1990 est.)	AREA: (in square miles)
Belize	*219,737*	*8,867*
Costa Rica	*3,032,795*	*19,575*
El Salvador	*5,309,865*	*8,260*
Guatemala	*9,097,636*	*42,042*
Honduras	*5,259,699*	*43,277*
Nicaragua	*3,722,683*	*50,193*
Panama	*2,425,400*	*29,208*

3. **Put a title on your map and make a legend (key). Put the scale of inches:miles on your map (1 inch on the map equals 40 miles on land).**

4. **After your map is completed, prepare a presentation for the rest of the class. The presentation should include: (1) a brief description of what your map shows, (2) what is meant by population density, and (3) how the population density of a nation is determined. As a part of your presentation discuss with the class the following questions and ideas:**

   a. *To put these figures in perspective, compare the population density of these nations to other places. (New Mexico 12.4, California 181, Massachusetts 752, New York 378, United States 70, Japan 860)*

   b. *Compare the area of Central American with the size of Arizona and New Mexico. (The two states together have an area of 235,593 square miles. Central American nations together have an area of 201,422 square miles.)*

   c. *Population density is one measure of how crowded a nation is or how much space it might have to expand into. However, this figure can be misleading. What other statistics or information would you want to know before making conclusions about these nations.*

   d. *How do yoiu think the relations between 2 nations might be affected if one nation has a very high population density while its neighbor has a very low one? Would it make a difference if you knew how most people in those nations made a living?*

MAP #3 - PER CAPITA GNP IN CENTRAL AMERICA

1. Please be as neat and as accurate as possible; the class will be referring to your map all week. On your group's large map, **label the following:**

NATIONS	CAPITAL CITIES	BODIES OF WATER AND RIVERS
Belize	*Belmopan*	*Caribbean Sea*
Colombia	*Guatemala*	*Lake Managua*
Costa Rica	*Managua*	*Lake Nicaragua*
El Salvador	*Panama*	*Pacific Ocean*
Guatemala	*San Jose*	*Panama Canal*
Honduras	*San Salvador*	*San Juan River*
Mexico	*Tegucigalpa*	
Nicaragua		

2. Use your imaginations to find a way to represent the per capita gross national product (GNP) of each Central America nation listed below. (GNP is the value of everything produced or sold in that country - here measured in U.S. dollars.) Please do not simply list the numbers. You need to use symbols or another type of representation. The rest of the class needs to be able to clearly see what the map represents.

Per Capita GNP of Central American Nations in 1989 (U.S. $)

Belize	1,600
Costa Rica	1,790
El Salvador	1,040
Guatemala	920
Honduras	900
Nicaragua	830
Panama	1,780

3. Put a **title** on your map and make a **legend** (key). Put the **scale of inches:miles** on your map (1 inch on the map equals 40 miles on land or sea).

4. After your map is completed, prepare a presentation for the rest of the class. The presentation should include a brief description of what your map shows. Discuss with the rest of the class possible answers to the following questions:

   a. *What does the term "per capita GNP" mean?*

   b. *Compare the figure for the Central American nations with that of the United States for the same time period (1989 - $21,100).*

   c. *What reasons can you think of to explain why some nations have a higher per capita GNP than others?*

   d. *Per capita GNP is one way of getting an idea about the standard of living of a nation. However, it does not tell a complete story. If you wanted to get a more complete picture, what else would you want to know about the economies of these nations?*

MAP #4 - EXPORTS FROM CENTRAL AMERICA

1. Please be as neat and as accurate as possible; the class will be referring to your map all week. On your group's large map, **label the following:**

NATIONS	CAPITAL CITIES	BODIES OF WATER AND RIVERS
Belize	*Belmopan*	*Caribbean Sea*
Colombia	*Guatemala*	*Lake Managua*
Costa Rica	*Managua*	*Lake Nicaragua*
El Salvador	*Panama*	*Pacific Ocean*
Guatemala	*San Jose*	*Panama Canal*
Honduras	*San Salvador*	*San Juan River*
Mexico	*Tegucigalpa*	
Nicaragua		

2. Use your imaginations to find a way to **represent the leading three exports** of each of the Central American nations. Use symbols or another type of representation in such a way that the rest of the class can clearly understand what the map represents. *Please do not simply list them on the map.* The figures are in **millions of U.S. dollars.** We will be more concerned with what the major exports are of each nation rather than what they are worth:

Belize *(1988)*	*(181.6 total)*	***Honduras*** *(1989)*	*(940.4 total)*
sugar	*35.0*	*bananas*	*343.0*
garments	*18.7*	*coffee*	*190.9*
citrus	*17.3*	*lead & zinc*	*88.8*
Costa Rica *(1989)*	*(1,403.9 total)*	***Nicaragua*** *(1988)*	*(212.7 total)*
coffee	*286.2*	*coffee*	*80.8*
Bananas	*270.6*	*cotton*	*50.6*
cattle & meat	*48.7*	*bananas*	*14.7*
El Salvador *(1988)*	*(608.8 total)*	***Panama*** *(1990)*	*(321.2 total)*
coffee	*360.8*	*bananas*	*89.4*
textiles	*52.5*	*shrimps*	*44.3*
chemicals	*37.3*	*sugar*	*36.8*
Guatemala *(1990)*	*(1267.0 total)*		
coffee	*334.1*		
sugar	*153.4*		
bananas	*95.7*		

3. Put a **title** on your map and make a **legend** (key). Put the **scale of inches:miles** on your map (1 inch on the map equals 40 miles on land).

4. Prepare a presentation for the rest of the class based on what you have learned from these statistics. To help you in your presentation, consider the following questions:
   a. *Most of the nations rely on the income from agricultural products. What do you think the risks are of this practice?*
   b. *Do these neighboring nations produce very different or similar products? How might this influence relations between the neighbors?*
   c. *Who do you think buys most of these products?*
   d. *What percentage of the total exports is the #1 export of each nation?*
   e. *From the presentations of the groups before yours, can you use any information to make your data more meaningful?*

CHART #1 - CULTURAL GROUPS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

1. Your task is to make a **chart** or **graph** that the class can use this week to show the **cultural make-up** of each of the Central American nations. Be sure to put a **title** and a **key** (legend) on your graph (1990 estimates).

Belize

African	*40%*
Mestizo	*33%*
Indian	*17%*
European, other	*10%*

Costa Rica

European (includes some mestizo)	*96%*
African	*2%*
Indian	*1%*
Chinese	*1%*

El Salvador

Mestizo	*89%*
Indian	*10%*
European	*1%*

Guatemala

Indian	*80%*
European	*19%*
African, Oriental	*1%*

Honduras

Mestizo	*90%*
European	*1%*
African	*2%*
Indian	*7%*

Nicaragua

Mestizo	*69%*
European	*17%*
African	*9%*
Indian	*5%*

Panama

Mestizo	*70%*
African	*14%*
European	*10%*
Indian	*6%*

2. After your chart is completed, prepare a presentation for the rest of the class. The presentation should include:
   (1) a description of what your chart shows,
   (2) a brief description of how the societies of the Central American nations differ from each other or are similar to each other, and
   (3) your leading a class discussion based on the following questions:

a. *What does the term Mestizo mean? (a person of mixed parentage, usually the offspring of a Spaniard or Portuguese and an American Indian)*

b. *What is the majority group in each nation?*

c. *Why do you think that the cultural group make-up of some of the Central American nations are so different from each other?*

d. *By using educated guesses and information from other group presentations, give some specific ideas as to why there is the cultural group make-up that there is in certain countries. As an example, why do you think that Guatemala has such a large Indian population? What is there about the location of Belize that would maybe explain why Belize has such a large African population?*

e. *Do you think that the cultural group make-up of a nation might led to conflict within that nation? If so, under what conditions or circumstances would this be so?*

CHART #2 - ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID FROM THE UNITED STATES TO CENTRAL AMERICA IN 1990

1. Your task is to make a **chart** or **graph** that the class can use this week. It will show the amount of **economic and military aid** that each of the Central American nations received from the United States in 1990. All figures are in **millions of U.S. dollars.**

	Economic Aid	Military Aid
Belize	*8.4 million*	*0.1 million*
Costa Rica	*95.3 million*	*0.2 million*
El Salvador	*246.7 million*	*81.0 million*
Guatemala	*114.7 million*	*3.3 million*
Honduras	*192.6 million*	*21.3 million*
Nicaragua	*223.3 million*	*0.0*
Panama	*397.0 million*	*0.0*

2. Put a **title** and a **legend** (key) on your chart.

3. After your chart is completed, prepare a presentation for the rest of the class. The presentation should include a brief description of what you chart shows. You should then tell the class or discuss with the class what your group thinks might be the answers to some of the following questions:

   a. *Why do you think the United States gives aid to other nations of the world?*

   b. *Why do you think the United States gives more aid to some nations that it does others?*

   c. *After you have listened to the other presentations by the groups in your class, can you use some of the information that you have heard to draw conclusions to the first two questions?*

   d. *How do you think these nations might be changed by the aid they receive from other nations?*